OF BRITISH GUIANA

## SAWARI

After five or six days of paddling up the Barama from the Great Falls at Towakaima, a river party watching for such things may see an opening in the underbrush on the right bank of the river. Near it on the ground, a woodskin will be lying bottom up among the bushes; cutlass slashes disfigure the bark of the nearby trees, and perhaps the pole of a set-line will be protruding from the water. Coming down to the water's edge is a path stippled with the prints of many bare toes. 621

In the arduous journey from the Falls only two other such signs of human life will have been seen the landings of the Kurewa and of the Kwamata settlements. And the traveller, who in this unmapped region relies upon the sketchy reports of the Caribs, will hope that this is one of the landings of the village of Sawari. As a matter of fact, it is.

Going ashore, the newcomers will follow the trail inland for perhaps a mile and, if not led astray by the numerous diverging paths in the dense jungle, will in due time arrive at a clearing where the ballidanna thatches of half a dozen Indian houses face the open sky. The houses seem to lie in the bottom of a green crater, for the wall of the jungle rises abruptly to a height of eighty to a hundred feet on all sides of the clearing, which is roughly elliptical in shape, two hundred and six feet long by one hundred and thirty-six feet wide.

Visitors "knock at the door" of a strange settlement by striking the mora trees along the path with their cutlasses. Apprised of the approach of strangers by these warning booms and by the barking of the settlement dogs, men and women of Sawari, clad only in loin cloths, will be waiting outside their houses to receive.

John Miller, the headman, a tall virile fellow with little blood- 609
shot eyes and a crooked left arm, long ago reduced to a mass of 142
scars by the shotgun of a jealous Carib husband, will probably 621
be there, surrounded by the three women of his household. Old Mary, toothless and wrinkled, with black hair streaming about her leathery shoulders and flap-like breasts, will stare unemotionally. Elizabeth, young, buxom, well rounded, and smooth-skinned, will perhaps linger modestly but inquisitively in the background, fingering the brass pin whose point projects outward a half inch

1: Gillin E-5 (1932-33)1936 SR9 Carib SR9



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from her perforated under lip. Charlotte, who is a young girl but recently come to adolescence, may walk about the new-comers with naïve curiosity. Old David, the medicine man, with the elbow

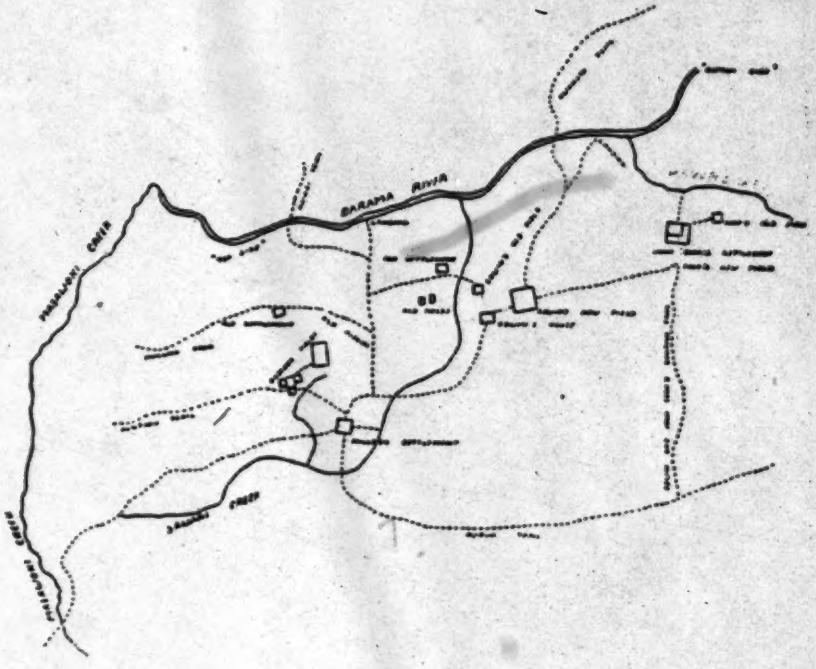


FIGURE 9

Sketch plan of the geographical relationships of the Sawari settlement, showing location of various residential plots, fields, and trails.

of his paralyzed right arm grasped in his left palm, will emerge from his small house north of Miller's large one, smiling slightly as a drop of water trickles down his wrinkled cheek from his rheumy right eye. With him will be his wife, Elizabeth, whose flat exhausted breasts afford the only indication of the encroach-

1: Gillin E-5 (1932-33) 1936 SR9 Carib SR9



ment of old age on a sturdy body. Columbus, a husky young man, and his wife, who has not yet reached puberty; small-boned, muscular Samuel and his large buxom wife Elizabeth, who is Miller's

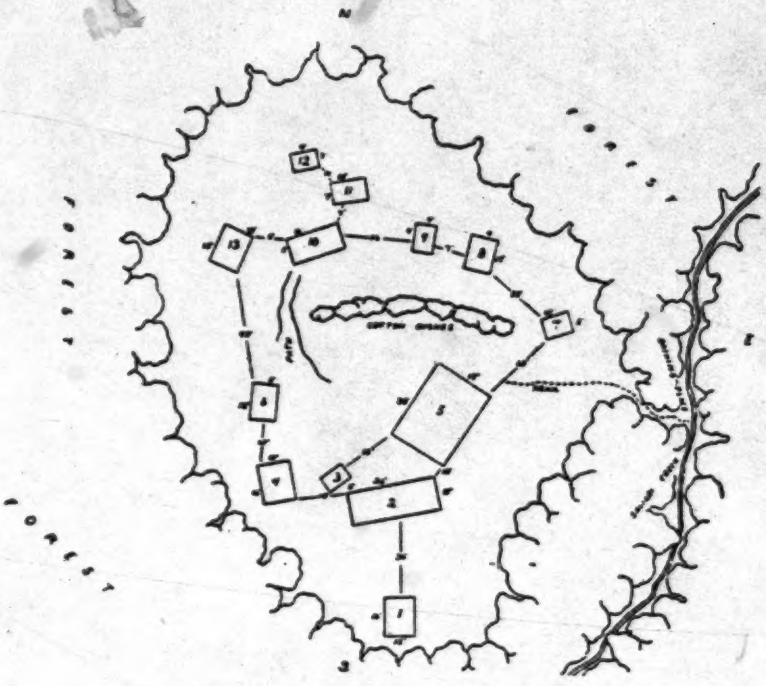

FIGURE 10
Sketch plan of "Miller's Clearing," Sawari settlement.

sister; sprightly middle-aged Caroline, another sister of Miller, and many little naked boys and girls will be in the welcoming party.

While the visitors and the Sawari people are smoking and exchanging small talk, someone will have slipped out to the other

1: Gillin E-5 (1932-33)1936 SR9 Carib SR9



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two clearings of the settlement with the news, for in a short time raw-boned John Cook will appear in his ragged bathing trunks, the end product of a complicated series of trading deals starting

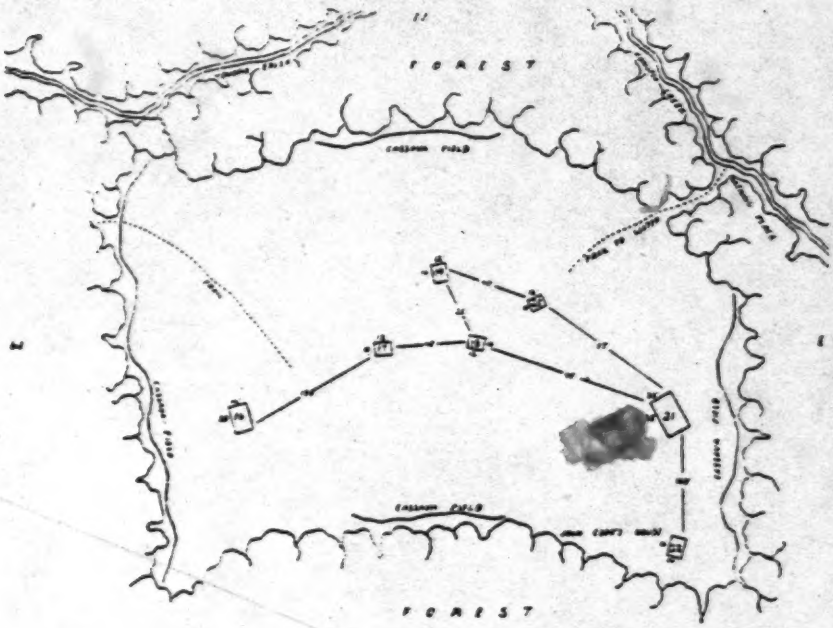


FIGURE 11
Sketch plan of "Edwin's Clearing," Sawari settlement.

at the coast. Big Edwin will lumber in, his slightly crossed eye focused at ambiguous points in the atmosphere. The young buck, Henry Daniel, Daniel and John, who live in John Cook's clearing, and a dozen wives and children will appear. Everyone will go

1: Gillin E-5 (1932-33) 1936 SR9 Carib SR9



to John Miller's house, the biggest in the settlement. Men will climb into hammocks or sit on stools and logs about the floor. Women will gather at the other end of the house and look on

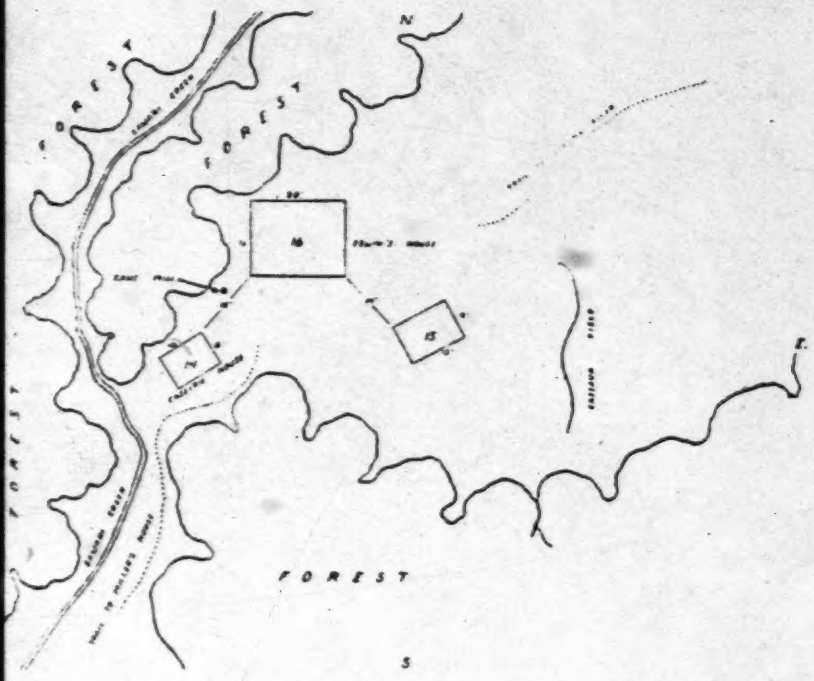


FIGURE 12

Sketch plan of "Cook's Clearing," Sawari settlement.

inquiringly from the distance. Even the children will be smoking the visitor's tobacco, earning it by carrying glowing fire-sticks from the fire under the pot in the corner. A long time will be spent in talking. . . .

food. Such exchanges were realized with the early prospectors. Provisions, especially cassava and meat, would be traded for salt, tools, tobacco, glass beads, and also money. Occasionally, parrots, monkeys, waracabras, and other pets were traded to these porknockers. Exchanges would occur more or less by chance. A porknocker might wander into a settlement and wait until the bashful residents had recovered themselves sufficiently to come out of hiding and deal with him. There was little bargaining. Rather, each party approached the exchange as a nonrecurring opportunity. When prospecting became more familiar among the Caribs, private ownership was recognized in gold creeks (Gillin 1934:335). The individual who discovered a specific creek was considered to be the owner. He could sell it, usually to a porknocker who came.

Eventually, Carib men exchanged short term periods of labor for trade goods. Often this work was done for a specific object. Guns which could be purchased over the counter in Georgetown were especially desired. An Amerindian would often be asked to cut down a large field and build a house for such a payment. However, as Gillin reports (1936:131), Caribs were not always so easily induced to work. The men of Savari refused employment by a prospector as they felt his trade goods were too meager. The Carib men had to desire the goods to be traded and also be assured of actually being paid and not expoited. It was some time before individual proknockers with their recurrent trips to the Upper Barama River area were able to count on help from specific Caribs. Even longer periods of trust were necessary before these Caribs agreed to work in return for specific trade goods

*177 592 621 not mature enough to have children. Two other clearings are inhabited by households of this type that have moved in from the more remote settlements. In both cases, the families of a man and his son-in-law have moved as a unit to the Air Strip.

The third category is still more complex. In these cases, larger numbers of people are present which contributes to the ambiguity of [166] household divisions. Four of these larger groups of relatives in a common clearing are clearly the result of the abandonment of the mine and the occurrence of new resources at the Air Strip. Kinsmen are temporarily allied for the move to the Air Strip from the mine as [596] well as from the more remote areas. These kinship groups are laterally extended. In two cases they are composed of the nuclear families of brothers as well as their sons and sons-in-law. In two other cases, the sons and sons-in-law of a single man and all their [484] wives and children are residing together. Among these groups, component units of a man and his wife and children often left on extended trips either to a more remote settlement or to Matthew's Ridge. Usually, this was because agricultural fields around the air strip were not yet productive.

*177 592 624 621 The two remaining examples in the third category are the clearings of the current Captain and the prominent Councillor. The Councillor is about fifty and has three wives of different ages. His household includes an adult son-in-law and son and his wives and [609] children. In addition, an old porknocker long resident among the Upper Barama River Caribs lives in the Councillor's clearing. 000 Holding office has served to extend the household of the current